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MEMOIR

OF

ISAAC PARRISH, M. D.

READ TO THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA.

February 2, 1853.

BY

SAMUEL JACKSON, M. D.,

FORMERLY OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

WRITTEN AND PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE COLLEGE.

PHILADELPHIA:
LIPPINCOTT, GRAMBO, AND CO.
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ISAAC PARRISH, M.D.

Isaac Parrish

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To commemorate the virtues of a departed friend, which I now do by command of the College, is a task both pleasing and painful. In this mixed emotion of pleasure and pain, you will all sympathize with me on the present occasion: for the subject of this memoir was the meritorious friend and companion of us all; one whom we looked to for pleasure and instruction; whose welcome voice was often heard in this hall, and never without sincere respect; whose friendly and benevolent demeanor won more and more our esteem and love.

Dr. ISAAC PARRISH was distinguished and favored by the merits of his ancestors. His great-great-grandfather was John Parrish, a native of England and of Dutch extraction. He commanded a merchant vessel trading to the Chesapeake, and was afterwards made surveyor-general of Maryland. He became possessed of considerable tracts of land, on a part of which some of his descendants now reside.

His great-grandfather, whose name was also John, died in possession of a landed estate on which a portion of the city of Baltimore is now built; but it was lost to his family by his generosity in the perilous friendship of indorsing.

Isaac Parrish, his grandfather, settled in Philadelphia, where he raised a numerous family, and retired from business in the decline of life with a respectable competence. He and his wife were eminent members of the society of Friends, and held important stations in the government of the Church. The following notice of this exemplary pair, I quote on account of its beauty as well as its propriety and authority, from the memoir of their son, Dr. Joseph Parrish, written by the President of this College.—

"The reward of a virtuous life," says Dr. Wood, "has seldom been more happily exemplified than in the old age of this venerable couple. They lived sixty-six years together and died within a very short period of each other at a very advanced age. Their last years were cheered by the affectionate attentions of their few remaining children. They who enjoyed the familiar intimacy of Dr. Joseph Parrish, cannot but vividly remember his beautiful deportment towards his aged parents. The youngest of eleven children, he was their joy and consolation through life; in youth obedient, in manhood affectionate and attentive; when the weakness of old age came upon them, all that was tender and respectful; so that when he closed the eyes of his venerable father, he could say with sincerity, that he was not conscious of having ever offended him."

The father of our departed friend was Dr. Joseph Parrish, the affectionate and pious son, a part of whose eulogy we have just read; a man too well known to require further notice, his character being engraved in the hearts of us all. His mother was Susanna Cox, daughter of John Cox, near Burlington, New Jersey, a very respectable preacher in the society of Friends, long and extensively known as one of their leading members. Of her, it is only necessary to say, that she was in all respects worthy of such a husband. She was the mother of eleven children, nine of whom are living—all enjoying very fully the comforts of life, and the good esteem of their neighbors, as also of a very extensive and numerous acquaintance.

Such, then, were the parents and the grand-parents of Isaac Parrish; and of this ancestry, all who knew him must acknowledge he was a worthy descendant; precisely such as they, in the ardor of their hopes, could have wished him to be.

He was the second child, and was born March 19, 1811. His education was begun in the schools which were under the sole government of the Friends; and he spent several years in their well-known classical academy, where his father had imbibed the rudiments of Latin, as well as Drs. James and Wistar, Physick and Dorsey. Having attained a sufficiency of Greek and Latin, he was transferred to the private boarding-school of John Gummere, in Burlington, New Jersey, a seminary of great and deserved reputation, particularly for mathematics, astronomy, chemistry,

and natural philosophy. In Mr. Gummere, he had a shining example of all that is good and amiable in the human character, as also a teacher of profound wisdom and learning. The present writer had the honor of his acquaintance, and he now finds pleasure in quoting from his excellent biographer, Wm. J. Allinson—"That he had pupils from nearly all the States of this Union, as well as from some of the West India Islands, who have gone forth into the world enriched and ennobled by his wisdom and his counsels. Many of them had been for numerous successive years far from their kindred, regarding him as a kind and faithful parent; and such was the filial confidence he uniformly inspired, that it may well be doubted, whether there were any among all his disciples in whom love for him did not amount to a principle."

The little Parrish was here a distinguished favorite among his schoolmates, being naturally cheerful and happy, ever ready to indulge in the innocent sports of childhood. He excelled in the useful art of swimming, which was so much practised and so highly commended by Franklin; and, like his father, he delighted in skating, thus wisely mixing, as the philosophic poet says, the pleasing with the useful.

He began the study of medicine with his father in 1829, where most of us know that he must have enjoyed many and peculiar advantages over students in nearly all other situations. He graduated in the University of Pennsylvania in 1832, just then entering on his twenty-second year. His thesis was written on spinal irritation, and it may be fairly considered as a very respectable performance for a man so young, giving thus early a good specimen of that clearness of thought, and of that perspicuous, precise, didactic style, which distinguished the author in riper years. He had spent the last year of his pupilage in the Blockley Hospital, and his experience therein appears to have suggested to him the subject of his thesis. Having been written from nature, it proved to be of so much importance that it was honored with a place in the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* for August, 1832.

[Since this memoir was read to the College in January, Joseph Carson, Professor of Mat. Med. in the University of Pennsylvania, has sent me the following:—

"Dr. Parrish was a student with me in the Philadelphia Alms-

house, during the winter of 1830–31. During our association, he was remarkable for his devotion to his profession, and especially desirous of acquiring practical knowledge. Of this I had ample evidence, from the fact that I was a senior student, and received from him frequent applications to partake of the opportunities presented in my department of the service which was distinct from his. The same application he made to others, and, indeed, he seemed anxious to avail himself of all the means of improvement the house afforded. He seemed to have a single purpose—the extension of his medical knowledge, and to this he adhered most closely. In this Institution, he collected the materials for his Inaugural Essay, and I well recollect the impression made upon me by the zeal and untiring devotion with which he pursued the object in view. I need not say how creditable was the performance, and what a true earnest it afforded of his subsequent course and position in the profession. Then, as afterwards, he exhibited capabilities of close application and sound reasoning.

"Among the many excellent traits of character, for which he was conspicuous, was his resolute moral firmness. I never knew him to swerve from a principle which had once been settled in his mind as a correct one; and so conscientious was he that seldom was he wrong in matters that pertained to duty. His intentions and sentiments were always honest, and expressed with so much frankness, that no one, however widely differing from him, could bring an accusation of deception or unfairness. To the day of his death, the same impressions have remained with me with respect to this estimable man, whose loss to the profession, I conceive to be a great one."

Such were the fruits of a good education under the care of parents and teachers whose continual example was not only the brightest and best, but whose uniform conduct was amiable in the eyes of a youth, whose ancestors had transmitted to him no evil propensities. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."]

The cholera having reached Philadelphia a few months after he had graduated, his father was appointed by the city authorities as chief physician to one of the hospitals, and four young men were delegated as his assistants; of these four our late friend was one, and thus he was brought a little into public view; but with the ex-

ception of this promotion to the cholera hospital, I do not find that he had any accidental or extraneous advantages. His father was too delicate and conscientious to obtrude his son, and hence he seldom recommended him without mentioning others at the same time, that patients might feel themselves free to choose. The son, however, had shining virtues that could not lie hid; they were continually breaking forth in acts of benevolence that quickly brought him into favorable notice: hence he was elected in 1834 one of the Surgeons of Wills Hospital, to which he was ardently devoted during the rest of his life, a space of eighteen years.

This same year, 1834, he was married to Sarah Redwood Longstreth, daughter of Samuel Longstreth, a respectable merchant of Philadelphia. In this alliance, his older brother writes me, "he found a most congenial companion, who shared with him the toils and anxieties of life during a happy union of eighteen years."

We must now view him a young physician in his twenty-fourth year, a candidate for public favor in a great city, with many hopes entertained by his friends, and many critical and some jealous eyes now turned upon him, as the representative of his eminent father. But skill in medicine and public confidence are not heirlooms in a family, and therefore the young man must labor among the poor, and meet with many sore repulses from the rich, even from some of those on whom his hopes had chiefly rested. His remedies are patience with infinite forbearance, the imperative *bear and forbear* of the Grecian philosopher. These are not only successful, but the necessary use of them in early life, serves to perfect the character of the rising physician; for there is no future period of his life in which these virtues are not pre-eminently useful. It is not often true in America, as Dr. Johnson said in London, that "a physician in a great city is the mere football of fortune." In our happier state of society, patient merit will generally command fortune and despise the doctrine of chances.

Dr. P. entered on practice when this city was replete with physicians of eminent merit and practical talents, who were great obstructions of course in his long, steep, and slippery ascent to the temple of fame; from our knowledge of his character, however, we cannot but fancy him as modest and unobtrusive, patient and hopeful, looking with cheering confidence to the time when diligent merit would find its reward. Nor was he disappointed, for every year

brought an accession of business, so that, long before his death, his modest hopes were fully satisfied; for it was not in his nature to envy the patronage of older physicians now long established in the hearts of the people. Both his early and later friends concur in opinion that he never could have used any subtleties for the purpose of acquiring favor; they all aver that he was, in the highest degree, open, candid, honorable, generous; so that he might have said with the author of the *Rambler*—"I have seldom descended to the arts by which favor is obtained." Dr. West, who was his fellow student, and knew him intimately for twenty-four years, agrees with many others that a spirited independence was one of his striking characteristics. But this noble trait was so tempered with a modest respect for the opinions of others, as never to offend even the most sensitive arrogance.

If it ever happens that physicians advancing in age and rising to a lucrative practice, forget their poor friends who helped them to their early experience, Dr. P. was not guilty of this ingratitude. He not only attended faithfully many poor families who had long depended on his father for medical aid, but he gave much of his time to fresh accessions of this humble class, when his time was of great value; and the present writer has seen him treat them with the same kindness of manners and the same affectionate solicitude with which he treated those *who were clothed in fine linen, and were fed sumptuously every day*. This I have seen when he has come to my house, and requested my aid, where there could be no hope of compensation in the present world. He might without arrogance have justly hoped, with the good Sydenham, "that when his last day should come, there would be a ready witness in his heart, that he had attended all his patients *of whatever condition* with the utmost fidelity, and that he had treated them all precisely as he could wish to be treated himself."*

His sense of our duty with respect to poor people, is well expressed in the following extract from a report he wrote as chairman of a certain committee of the Philadelphia County Medical

* Sane cum supremus vitæ instabit dies, confido mihi adfuturum alacrem in præcordiis testem, me ægrorum omnium, *cujuscunque demum sortis*, summâ fide ac diligentiâ salutem procurasse, quorum interim nemo à me aliàs tractatus est quam ego memet tractari cuperem.—*De Feb. Pestil. et Pest. annorum* 1665 *et* 66, cap. ii.

Society. It is printed in the *Transactions* of the Pennsylvania State Medical Society for 1852. Speaking of gratuitous services to the poor, he says: "They are a part of the physician's duty as a member of an educated and beneficent profession; and upon his faithful performance of them, depend his own peace of mind and the preservation of the character of the body to which he has voluntarily attached himself. The committee would, therefore, be averse to any action which should in anywise contravene the established usages of the profession as laid down in our code of ethics; or which should detract from that high character for disinterested benevolence towards the sick and destitute which has for ages characterized the medical calling. We can refer with honest pride to the past history of medicine, as furnishing a more distinguished line of public benefactors than are to be found in any other calling. How many physicians, without the expectation of pecuniary reward or the hope of future fame, have calmly and resolutely braved the horrors of pestilence; and have even fallen victims to its ravages while attending with impartial fidelity upon the rich and the poor who, in the general panic, were deserted by kindred and friends? How often have the duties of the sympathizing friend, the attentive nurse, and the skilful physician been combined in the same person, when danger threatened and the extremity seemed at hand? What higher character can we contemplate in the scenes of actual life, than the wise and good physician, the profound and learned medical philosopher, ministering with his own hands to the poverty-stricken victim of disease; cheerfully encountering the dangers, privations, and toils incident to his position, with the prominent desire of benefiting his fellow-man?"

With respect to his faithfulness in attending the poor, and the suavity of his intercourse with his medical brethren, I will here quote from a letter addressed to me by Dr. Littell, one of his fellow-laborers in Wills Hospital.

"Dr. Parrish had been connected with Wills Hospital from its foundation, having been elected surgeon, together with Drs. Hays, Fox, and myself, in the year 1834. It was a favorite field of labor, and he brought to its cultivation the practical good sense and general philanthropy for which he was distinguished. While he never lost sight of the primary object of the institution—the

relief of those who sought its aid—he endeavored to make it the medium also of disseminating a knowledge of ophthalmic medicine; inviting with this view the attendance of students, and freely imparting by lecture and otherwise the valuable information which he possessed. The responsibilities of his position were faithfully discharged; his attention to the patients was exemplary; and his deportment towards them kind and sympathizing. He warmly advocated an enlargement of the hospital, in order to fulfil more completely the beneficent purpose for which it was established, and was ever ready to co-operate in any well-devised plan for the accomplishment of this object. Unselfish in an unusual degree, he never hesitated to assume his full share of labor and responsibility; and his intercourse with his colleagues was characterized throughout by courtesy, delicacy, and propriety. Above all affectation of superior knowledge or skill, he always manifested for the opinions of others the deference and respect which were justly accorded to his own. Dr. Parrish was, as you well know, a man of upright and honorable feelings, far removed from all low or mercenary influences; and while regardless of personal considerations, intent only on maintaining the dignity and extending the usefulness of his profession. 'Full of love and sweet humanity,' he entered upon his mission of good to man; quietly and unostentatiously performed the obligations it involved; 'nor made a pause, nor left a void,' until his benevolent career was closed in death. I look backward through the long period of eighteen years, during which we were associated in the surgical direction of the hospital, without the recollection of a single circumstance to disturb the harmony of our relations; and shall long deplore the bereavement which has deprived me of a friend and colleague with whom it was pleasant to take counsel and hold converse."

Dr. Hays was another of his associates in the hospital for eighteen years, as was also Dr. Fox for fourteen years. They both speak of his services, and the suavity of their intercourse with him, in the same spirit. Dr. Neill, who was also his colleague in the same hospital during some years, writes me the following letter:—

"His naturally benevolent disposition and the gentleness of his manners were well calculated to inspire the confidence and secure the affection of the sick. The children especially, of whom there

were always a number in the hospital, were to him objects of peculiar interest; and by his paternal management of them, he induced them often to submit to painful operations—which severity could never have effected—thereby affording us a striking example of the controlling influence which a mild and sympathizing deportment will always give us over hospital patients.

"Dr. P. was the most active of his colleagues in bringing this hospital within the range of medical students as a clinical school. He gave the first regular course of instruction on ophthalmic surgery in that institution in the winter of 1839–40; and in succeeding years he was always followed through the wards by classes of students.

"As a lecturer, he was instructive and impressive; his voice was clear, and his enunciation distinct and emphatic. He was quick in seizing on the striking point of a case, and so great was his fluency and command of language that he never failed of impressing his auditors."

Dr. Parrish was strongly of opinion that Medical Societies might be so organized as to exercise an important government over the delinquent part of the profession, as well as to promote the diffusion of medical knowledge and to fan the latent fires of genius; hence we found him always ready to give time and labor in their service. In this College, he was a conspicuous man; clear, precise, and forcible in debate, always winning the attention and respect of the house. His name appears very often in the printed discussions, and he wrote several very useful papers, besides five luminous "Annual Reports on the Progress of Surgery," all which are printed in the *Transactions* of the College.

In these, you will find that his sympathy with human suffering made him hail with enthusiasm the various reports on the anæsthetic powers of ether and chloroform; and though he was sometimes shocked, as we all have been, by hearing of deaths therefrom, he was yet by no means entirely disheartened; he remembered that the most useful medicines were not established without having done much evil through an incautious or ignorant use, and he therefore hoped the time was not far distant when ether and chloroform would prove as safe as bark and laudanum have now become. In this decision, his usual firmness, benevolence, and

hope appeared in the opinion of some to predominate over his usual caution.

In the State Society, his accustomed activity was not wanting; he joined cordially in the business, and he wrote the Sanatory Report of the County of Philadelphia, which is published in the *Transactions* of the Society for 1851. He was one of the most conspicuous men in the County Medical Society, and was twice elected its vice-president. In fact, wherever a sense of duty led him, he found much to do, and he always did it with alacrity and vigor.

He felt from the first a sincere and even an affectionate interest in the establishment of the American Medical Association, and he was therefore appointed at the Convention of New York in 1846, one of a committee, whose duty it was to report on the subject of taking from colleges and other interested corporations, the right of conferring degrees and licenses to practice. He wrote a report on that subject for the Convention of Philadelphia in 1847, and it was printed in the *Proceedings* of that year. This document is worthy of being read again and again, by all who are ready to judge hardly of others, without knowing whether they themselves would do better in similar circumstances. It is remarkable for its honest casuistry, as also for its firmness on one side and its mildness on the other. It asserts that abuses did exist, as in all other human things, but that the remedies were not to be rashly administered by impetuous and sweeping hands—rather by gentle means gradually advanced, as favorable and safe opportunities might open the way.

Thus, after showing the utter impossibility of obtaining relief from State legislatures, and the utter hopelessness of voluntary reform in many of the schools, he says: "There is a power more potent than that exercised by legislatures, or by the corporations which they may create; it is the influence of combined and harmonious action, directed to a special object, by the great body of the medical profession. This power, which is popularly termed public sentiment is, in this country at least, the most potential agency which can be brought to bear upon the errors or vices of the age, in whatever form they may be presented. It is, in fact, the source of law, and, in a republic, constitutes the mighty lever by which the powers of government are moved and its decrees enforced. Now, we must bring this great lever to bear upon the

errors and abuses that exist in the medical profession; and, if well directed and skilfully applied, there cannot be a doubt that it will prove more effectual in removing them than appeals to legislatures or any partial attempt to remedy special evils."

In the next page he says: "If, then, the Medical Association should embody, as we believe it will, a large portion of the respectability and intelligence of the profession, and should assume a permanent and well-disciplined form, we feel assured that any changes in the existing order of things which it may propose to the medical colleges of the country, will meet with the most respectful consideration."

This was the benevolent sentiment of an honest mind, filled with that charity which, St. Paul says, believeth and hopeth all things; nor was the author entirely deceived in his expectations, nor did he, as we humbly pray, believe and hope too much; yet six years have nearly gone by, and the changes for the better are perceived with difficulty. Let us, however, live, like Dr. P., in the hope that the sanative influence of this great and useful body will finally prevail.

At the meeting of the Association at Baltimore, in 1848, he was appointed one of a committee on Public Hygiene; and, at the meeting of Boston of 1849, he read an able paper "On the Sanatory Condition of Philadelphia," wherein he showed in strong colors the growing evils of a large and increasing city, and how they are sadly neglected, till remedies are hopeless, if not impossible. He shows what evils the inordinate cupidity of the landlord brings on the community, by building up alleys and courts with sub-courts, thus shutting out light, air, and therefore health, from the unfortunate inhabitants of these dreary abodes. He descants largely on the evils of those crowded habitations in generating typhus fevers, cholera, and infantile summer diseases.

In page 469, he says: "While taste and elegance adorn the mansion of the rich, and increasing splendor may mark the structures which public munificence or private enterprise rears to charity or science; yet, if the dwellings of the poor are neglected, if light and air are shut out from their abodes, and avarice is allowed to feed and fatten on their helplessness, we shall fail in establishing cities worthy of that high destiny to which our country aspires. It is the boast of the republic to guard with an equal

eye the happiness and interests of all classes, and especially to protect those who, from adverse circumstances, may be exposed to privations and suffering, at the hands of their more favored fellow-citizens; let our legislatures, then, be inspired with the genius of our institutions, and act on this principle, and the work which we advocate, will be speedily accomplished."

In the same report, he speaks concerning the necessity of better methods of draining and cleansing the city; and he says much on the great neglect of ventilation, both in private houses and public buildings, particularly schoolhouses. He treats, also, of our prison discipline, and of its effects on the mind and body of criminals—a subject to be resumed as we proceed.

This highly valuable report makes thirty pages of the *Transactions*, and is thrice worthy of a serious consideration by legislatures, councils, and particularly by those who are building up courts and alleys, which may put money in both pockets at the expense of the health and lives of the poor. The author holds forth a true mirror, in which they may see themselves as they are—prodigal of money in whatever may increase the population of the city, almost abandoned as it respects the conservation of health and morals, in the accumulating mass of vicious and suffering humanity. When I heard this masterly report read at Boston, I expected some vigorous measures would be recommended, since it applies to other cities as well as our own; but, alas! the warning voice of the physician is too often disregarded.

We have already said that he wrote many valuable papers, which are printed in the *Transactions* of our College; we shall now take leave of him in his medical capacity, by noticing an essay which he published on "Congestive Fever," in the *Amer. Journ. of the Med Sci.* for 1845. The author wishes to show that congestion is not the cause of prostration in this fever, that hence this prostration is not to be treated by bleeding. He considers the congestion a mere symptom of feeble innervation, and therefore to be treated by stimulants. It is an able argument, extending to 16 pages, but a review would be foreign to the object of this memoir. It is a subject involved in clouds, which even the light of experience, with the heat of controversy, has not been able to scatter.

The term *congestive fever* is very erroneous, and always uncertain, since many fevers—remittent, yellow, typhus, scarlet—are often

attended by this symptom. It is an accidental condition of the system, and ought, therefore, to be called the congestive *state* of this or that fever. That it does sometimes exist, is certain, even in cases which do not admit of bleeding; that it is often suspected when it does *not* exist, is very probable; that it is often cured by bleeding, ample experience, from Sydenham downwards, has proved; it is equally certain that it has often been cured by stimulants. Happy must be the physician, and fortunate too, who decides promptly on the method appropriate to each peculiar case.

It was not merely in medicine that Dr. Parrish's benevolence shone conspicuous; he mingled with the philanthropists of our city, and sought other modes of usefulness. Wherever, indeed, there was misery to be relieved or vice to be prevented, there his mind was directed, as all congenial spirits who conversed with him can testify. With respect to his readiness to serve the despised children of Africa, he was brought up, it might be said, at the very *feet of Gamaliel;* he therefore served them faithfully, not only in his medical capacity, but he extended the hand of friendship to them in many ways. He was very early made a member of the "Society for the Abolition of Slavery," of which Franklin Rush, and Wistar had been presidents, and he was a member of the Board of Education, whose province it was to devote a considerable fund to the schooling of the colored race. He hated slavery, but he was filled with charity and kindness for the holders of slaves, considering them as equally oppressed with the slaves themselves.

Here we must remember that he belonged, both by birth and education, to a sect of Christians who have from their very origin, 200 years ago, distinguished themselves, above all other people, by their resolute and firm maintenance of personal, religious, and civil liberty. Kings have often yielded to their persisting importunities, and honored even their boldness. Barclay cautioned Charles II. against the tyranny of his government, and wrote to him: "Thou hast reason to know how hateful is the oppressor, both to God and man;"* and the illustrious Penn struggled hard with James and his ministers for this triple liberty, though opposed by the Church of England, backed by the whole body of the Presbyterians, Cove-

* Preface to his Apology.

nanters, Independents, Roundheads, and Whatnots, till he finally established it in this happier land, which has since assumed the motto—alas! more appropriate in his own time—*Virtue, Liberty, and Independence.*

Dr. Parrish was elected a member of the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Prisons; hence he soon became a frequent visitor of the penitentiary, as Dr. Robert A. Given, then resident physician, writes me, "examining the arrangements of the cells, and closely inspecting the health of their inmates."

He must here have found an exhilarating pleasure in looking back to the labors of his grandfather, Isaac Parrish, who was also deeply concerned for many years in the reformation of prisons. The first meeting of citizens, to take into consideration the condition of the Philadelphia prison, was had in the year 1778, and was held at this grandfather's house. What good man would not rather have such things told of his ancestor, than that he had conquered Mexico, or had even conducted our revolutionary armies? "I would rather," exclaimed an American colonel, at the grave of a sainted man, "I would rather be Anthony Benezet in that coffin, than Gen. Washington with all his fame."* "My boast," says the pious Cowper—

> "My boast is not that I deduce my birth
> From loins enthroned, and nobles of the earth;
> Far higher, far, my proud pretensions rise,
> The son of parents passed into the skies."

But, to resume our subject—Dr. Given had already obtained the correction of some prominent evils that tended to the injury of both mind and body; he had also shown that there was a great amount of mortality and insanity among the convicts, an alarming fact, which some of the older advocates of solitary confinement were not willing to hear or to credit. "The effects of our discipline on health," says Dr. Given, "were entirely unsuspected, its friends being so dazzled by its supposed moral influences as to be totally blind to its physical and mental evils."† These men, thus wrapped up in their admiration of solitude and darkness, were indeed so dazzled by the light which Dr. Given had

* Rush's Literary and Phil. Essays, and Lemprière's Biog. Dict.

† Twenty-third Ann. Report, p. 25.

flashed in their faces, that they averred positively they could see nothing, and that there was nothing to be seen; like father Gobbo in the "Merchant of Venice," they confessed themselves "sand-blind." Dr. Parrish now came in to the support of Dr. Given, some of the Prison Discipline Society joined them, and, with difficulty, they procured an appointment of physicians to inspect the penitentiaries of neighboring States, wherein the opposite or *congregate* system of discipline was in use. The commission was instructed to inquire into the physical and mental health of the convicts, and to examine the construction, discipline, domestic arrangements, system of labor, and all matters pertaining to the controversy respecting the two modes of confinement—the *gregarious*, and the *solitary*.

Of this laudable and highly responsible commission, Dr. P. had the honor of being a member, nor would it have been easy to find a mind more adapted to the business. He had been for some years very seriously exercised in this controversy, and he had therefore made it a subject of conversation and inquiry in his various intercourse with the philanthropists, to many of whom he was known through his own merits and those of his beneficent father. He read a paper to the Society in 1849, about two years after his return, entitled, "Recollections of a Tour of Observation to the State Prisons of Maryland, New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut." The Society ordered it to be published, and it appeared accordingly in vol. vi. No. 1, of the *Pennsylvania Journal of Prison Discipline*.

It is an able and beautiful report, in which joy and sorrow, approbation and reproof, succeed each other as they ought to do in every mind that is sensible to the sufferings of humanity. In all the prisons he found something to commend, and in Boston, particularly, his heart was gladdened with some improvements, which he had not seen at home, and did not expect to see abroad. He started on this journey with a humane but an enlightened prejudice against solitary confinement, as rigidly administered in the Eastern Penitentiary, and though no man could be more open to conviction, or more ready to confess an error, it is plain from the tenor of his "Recollections," that his fears for both mind and body in solitude were not lessened by what he had seen in the *congregate* prisons.

He then continued his investigations at home, and particularly in relation to the effects of solitary confinement and sedentary labor on the African race. Dr. B. H. Coates, a member of the same Society, had called their attention as early as 1840 to the peculiarly injurious operation of solitude and sedentary labor on this companionable people, naturally fond of talk and sunshine; and he subsequently brought the subject before the American Philosophical Society, in a scientific communication, which was published in their *Transactions* for 1843. This paper attracted much attention at the time, and caused no little discussion; but, strange indeed, it led to no practical results.

Hence it was that in April, 1849, Dr. P. brought a resolution before the Society, for the appointment of a committee, to report on the disproportionate mortality and the relative length of sentences between the white and colored prisoners. He wrote the report, and read it at the meeting of the Society in November, 1849. They ordered this paper to be printed entire in the next number of their Journal, that two hundred and fifty extra copies of the Journal be printed, and that copies of the report itself be sent to the Governor, to the Judges of the Supreme Court, and of the Courts of Common Pleas.

In this report, he shows that the mortality was much greater among the negroes than the whites; and he quotes the authority of Dr. Darrach, formerly visiting physician, and also the labors of Dr. Coates, in proof of his statement. But he gives also the statistics of mortality for twenty years, and shows that in the whites it averaged 4½ per cent. per annum, while the negroes perished at the rate of 18 per cent. In the County Prison, the disproportion was nearly the same; and also nearly the same at Pittsburg and Trenton. He acknowledges that the mortality of the blacks is greater outside of the prison; as Dr. Emerson has shown, that during ten of the above twenty years, the deaths of negroes was 3¼ per cent., and that of the whites, 2.37. Accordingly, four blacks to one white die in prison, while in the open community not quite two to one. "Causes," he says truly, "must, therefore, exist in the prison which produce results that do not exist out of the walls." These causes he finds, as did Dr. Coates, in the peculiar corporeal and mental constitution of the African, that requires company, merriment, sunshine, and exercise, with warmer apartments than our penitentiary meanly and criminally affords.

In this highly valued report, he brought to light a mysterious practice of our courts, which ought to be considered by the public with no little solicitude. The negroes, for the same crimes, were almost universally sentenced for a much longer time than the whites, or, as Voltaire calls them, the ash-colored people. He shows too that the whites are pardoned at the rate of 15 per cent. with their *short* sentences, and that the negroes, with their *long* sentences, are pardoned at the rate of only 3 per cent. This prospect, then, of a long confinement, without hope of pardon, operates on the mind and indirectly on the body, causing both mental and corporeal depression that tends to consumption and scrofula. This is another reason, then, for the greater mortality of negroes; for this depressing influence must increase, as do the squares of the months to be spent in hopeless solitude and darkness.

But Dr. P.'s labors in the cause of the prisoner did not end even here; he seems to have had continually before him the memorable words—"*I was in prison, and ye visited me.*" He read to the College in 1851, a paper "On the Mortality and Insanity in Separate-plan Prisons in England and America." It is found in Vol. I. New Series, page 173, of the *Transactions*. His object is to show that long sentences are dangerous to the health both of body and mind. In England, separate confinement is, for the most part, merely preparatory to transportation; therefore, the time is short, seldom exceeding a year, and the deaths, though considered by the English themselves as too many, are yet few in comparison with ours. So with respect to insanity—the amount is alarming to the English authorities, though small when compared with ours in the Eastern Penitentiary.

Now, do you ask, what all these labors and writings tended to, or what they have effected? *In the first place*, then, they satisfied the requirements of an enlightened conscience, which found, in the final retrospect, no work left undone, no duty neglected; he, therefore, had not, in that awful hour, to look back, as Persius says, "on life as on a murky day, and to groan away the few minutes then left him."*

* Tum crassos transisse dies lucemque palustrem
Et sibi jam seri vitam ingemuêre relictam.—Sat. v.

In the second place, these exertions greatly assisted Dr. Robert A. Given, the resident physician, in curing some of the various evils then existing. When this gentleman began his useful career in that house, being one of those benevolent youths, who cannot see misery without burning to relieve it, he quickly enthralled himself with various projected reformations. He won over to his side, by patience and perseverance, a portion of the Inspectors and of the Prison Society. Hence various improvements were made: baths, flannel under-clothes, and a better diet were introduced; it was forbidden to wash the cells, by which watery folly they had been made damp and unhealthy;* ventilation was attended to; a school-master was introduced; singing, whistling, and musical instruments were at last permitted, by which the obdurate heart might be softened, and the sinking spirits revived; religious newspapers were brought in, and a more free admission of friends was permitted. Such were some of the ameliorations introduced by Dr. Given's urgency.

But there was a portion of the Inspectors, as well as of the Prison Society, who were very unwilling to hear the salutary truths that were vehemently urged by the resolute Doctor. These strenuous conservators of old things, whether good or evil, "loving darkness rather than light," were obstinately opposed to every whisper that could bring obloquy on their favorite system of punishment by solitude and darkness. Hence, when they were told how great was the amount of mortality and insanity; how great and how useless, nay, how injurious, were many severities and deprivations; how criminally filthy and poisonous were the cells; they were astounded by the audacity of the medical profession, and hardly granted the importunate Doctor a patient hearing. It was in this state of things, that Dr. Parrish, as a member of the Prison Discipline Society, stepped forward and lent the struggling Resident Physician the whole weight of his influence. This fact may be seen from the following extract of a letter from Dr. Given to the present writer.

"Such facts were communicated to Dr. Parrish, as confirmed

* The cells ought to be scoured with dry sand, and this warmed in winter. The Romans scoured their pavements with sand, and sometimes with sawdust.—JUVENAL, SAT. xiv. 67.

his long-entertained fears, that however wise, in a moral light, the principle of separating convicts, the administration of the system at the Eastern Penitentiary, was attended by such hygienic and disciplinary defects as must necessarily produce an undue amount of suffering and death. To remedy these defects, however arduous the task, Dr. Parrish at once resolved. But, with characteristic prudence, he determined that neither his own suspicions nor the representations of others, should induce him to resort to active measures, till personal observation had established the truth. He became, therefore, a constant visitor, examining the arrangements of the cells, and closely scrutinizing the health of their inmates. These investigations, in themselves physically and morally repulsive, satisfied him that the amount of insanity and death was quite disproportioned to the number in confinement. Different views, however, were still maintained by a large majority of the Prison Society, and it was argued by them, that a similar scrutiny of the *congregate* prisons would show an equal degree of physical and mental disease. To solve this question, it was now proposed that a committee of physicians should be appointed to visit the *congregate* prisons of the Union, and to report on the general health of the convicts."

Dr. Parrish's *Recollections* of this tour, we have already noticed, and said that they did not lessen his fears for the effects of solitary confinement. He therefore continued his investigations; he discussed the subject earnestly in the Society, as well as in private conversations, and he wrote the important paper already mentioned on the "Health and Mortality of Convicts," which was extensively circulated by the Society, and has made such an impression on our courts that they have acknowledged the propriety of shorter sentences. All the reforms which we have mentioned or alluded to, and some others, are carefully noted by Dr. Given, in his *Annual Report*, for 1851, published by the Inspectors. Death and insanity have been greatly diminished the last two years, nearly two-thirds; and no other cause can be assigned than the improvements suggested and importunately urged by Drs. Given and Parrish.

[When this memoir was read to the College last January, I was not informed of one fact to which I now request the reader's attention. So earnest was Dr. Given in the prison reformation

that he requested the aid of Dr. Charles Evans in examining the state of things, and in remonstrating with the advocates of the old discipline. Dr. Evans gave his aid promptly; and finding so much of death and insanity, he voluntarily wrote an impressive letter to the Inspectors in the summer of 1848. This benevolent effort having effected nothing, the three medical brethren, Drs. Given, Parrish, and Evans, continued their labors, and urged the Committee of the Prison Discipline Society to call a special meeting for discussing the subject. This was done; and the Judges of the courts with other respectable citizens attended. Dr. Evans here gave the result of his investigations, and urged an immediate reform in some parts of their discipline. Drs. Bell, Coates, and Hartshorne, with Judge Kelly and others, joined him. The Committee then requested Dr. Evans to write out his opinions; this he did in a very authoritative and yet polite manner; and the Inspectors were brought at last to perceive the necessity of the changes proposed.

This is one among many proofs how hard it is for physicians, however able and devoted, to gain a hearing from the arrogant self-sufficiency of public officers.]

We are now to consider briefly the claims of Dr. P. as a writer; and here it must be remembered that he wrote nothing to serve the purposes of present or posthumous fame. All was written through a present sense of duty, without an author's ambition, or any object save that of doing good. He wrote with facility in a correct, perspicuous, precise style, and often with much beauty and simple unsought elegance. He always went directly to the end of his period, without stepping aside for the sake of ambitious ornaments; hence it would be difficult to find among our medical writers more than a very few whose style and manner are more suited to didactic purposes. Nor was he incapable of some variety. When this College had to mourn the death of its vice-president, Dr. Otto, our friend was appointed to write a memoir of this venerable man; and he did not fail to give a beautiful specimen of biography, as well as a general proof of his abilities in this difficult department of writing. Those of us who knew Dr. Otto, know well that it is written from nature, and founded in plain unvarnished facts, without fanciful distortion or even exaggeration. He did not imagine a perfect man, and then describe

what he saw in his own mind; but he painted from nature, and we all know that the picture is true. When Milton began to aspire to posthumous fame, he hoped that he would be able to write something that his "countrymen would not willingly let die." What the great poet hoped to do for his country, Dr. P. has done for the family of Dr. Otto; they will surely cherish this biography, and thank the author through many generations; in the language of Milton, *they will not willingly let it die.*

In his various writings, he always appears fully master of his subject, and to have made the best distribution of the different parts, so as to render his piece both luminous and attractive; thus showing a full comprehension of his subject without neglecting the minute particulars, always abounding in medical description. Had he lived to practice and to write another twenty-one years, he might have proved one of the most distinguished benefactors of our science among the medical literati; for he not only had talents for communicating knowledge in an easy and pleasing way, but he was too good a man to pass through life without doing his part in the improvement of medicine, and "straining every nerve," as Sydenham said of himself, "that the cure of diseases after his death might be conducted with greater certainty."*

With respect to his domestic and civil relations, he was a truly exemplary man; a tender husband and father, an affectionate brother, a kind neighbor. No disinterested man ever had reason to complain of his conduct and bearing; so that we may say of him as it was said of Sir Joshua Reynolds, "that if any man had quarrelled with him, he could not have found it possible to abuse him."

The accumulation of property he almost wholly disregarded. He did not affect to despise money, nor did he part with it imprudently; but he did not seek riches as earnestly as most other men, even the good, are accustomed to do. Leaving his pecuniary affairs to his wife and older brother, he pursued the even tenor of his placid way, in visiting the sick and relieving the distressed. We have already spoken of his faithfulness in attending the poor; it remains to be said that his purse was freely opened

* —— omnes animi nervos intendisse, ut siquo modo fieri possit, morborum medela post cineres meos majori cum certitudine administraretur.—*De Feb. Pestil. et Pest.* Ann. 1765-66, cap. ii.

to them, both in private and public beneficence; and to this must be added, the time that he spent in benevolent societies, when time was the same thing to him as money.

Like his father, he never enforced the payment of his bills; but whether this leniency be always commendable, may admit of a question. It may add to the physician's dignity, and save him many unpleasant collisions; for what can be more humiliating than to appear in Court for the purpose of enforcing the payment of our fees? But the relinquishing of them will encourage the dishonest, and multiply their number; thus injuring other creditors who may be very unable to sustain the loss. I believe the majority of this College would not recommend the general adoption of this gentleness towards vicious debtors. Goldsmith says of his village curate, that "even his failings leaned to virtue's side;" but the virtue itself of the Parrishes appears to me to have leaned a little in this case, when it ought to have been perfectly erect.

With respect to that all-important subject, *Religion*, Dr. Parrish was a genuine Quaker on the primitive model, precisely such as George Fox, or William Penn, or his venerable father could have wished him to be. He used, of course, what the Friends call their "plainness of speech, behavior, and apparel;" a lame and unsteady tripod, from which many have fallen, and whereupon few can sit to their comfort. This threefold peculiarity has given them infinite trouble for many generations; and, as the present writer has long thought, with great loss and no profit. It was no trouble, however, to the meek and humble Dr. Parrish; it sat easy upon him, like a born-gentleman's native urbanity, in whatever company he happened to be. Nor could any of us who knew the father, wish that the son had thrown off the hereditary costume and manners; we should have felt, that there was a want of due respect to the wishes and comforts of a virtuous ancestry.

Though a strenuous Friend in his manners, customs, and doctrines, he was deeply impressed with St. Paul's opinions of charity, and was always ready to mingle with mankind in whatever was truly innocent. Thus, while music was neither pleasing to his ear nor consistent with his religion, he rejoiced greatly on hearing the poor inmates of the solitary prison, as Dr. Given tells me, softening their incommunicable sorrows by whistling and singing.

He was as free from pride as a just sense of the dignity of human nature would admit; and vanity was an entire stranger to his mind. His soul was meek and humble: though relying with confidence on his faith, it was no part of his religion to arrogate peculiar merits, or to *thank his heavenly Father that he was not as other men were.*

He was a very faithful attendant of public worship; and he always endeavored to arrange his business so that this duty might not be prevented. Nor was he often absent from those business meetings of the Society which are regularly held for the purposes of internal discipline and acts of special beneficence. In these meetings he was a ready speaker, and his speeches, as I have been told by an elder of the church, were always heard with respect; in the language of Friends, "they were always very acceptable."

Such was the truly catholic and spiritual religion of Dr. Parrish; and we shall find that in his last hour, it did not deceive him. So serene and hopeful was he when death hovered over him, that he might have called his friends, as Addison did Lord Warwick, "to see in what manner a Christian could die."

He was of a slender, delicate frame, always endowed with more vigor of mind than body; and, during his last year, he suffered almost continually from dyspepsia, which greatly lessened his strength. The last twenty days previous to his sickness, were spent with all the labor and anxiety of a parent, in attending day and night on his eldest son, who had sickened with a fatal dysentery, near Christiana, about fifty-seven miles west of Philadelphia. He had the sorrow of seeing his child in a hopeless state, when he was suddenly and violently seized himself with the same disease. He had struggled with it to the fourth day, when this mortal dysentery invaded the family of Levi Pownall, in whose hospitable mansion he lay; and it was therefore thought best by himself, wife, and brothers, that he should be forthwith brought to his home in Philadelphia. Here was a severe trial of his fortitude, for it was necessary to leave his child, whom he had little hope of seeing again, and to leave his wife to attend this child, while he was beginning, what he must then have feared, might be his journey to the grave. Notwithstanding his tenderness and sensibility, which were always great, he bore this cruel separation

with the fortitude of a man whom nothing could deter from his duty.

Soon after his reaching home, it was too clearly seen that his disease was eluding the powers of medicine, and his wife was therefore sent for, to leave her dying child with her friends, that she might not be absent from the closing scene. He looked to his approaching end with firmness and composure, professing with his accustomed humility, his unworthiness of a seat in the heavenly kingdom, but filled with hope and confidence in the mercies of God, that he was now going to receive the rewards of a well-spent life. He breathed his last without pain or struggle, about 1 o'clock on Saturday, the 31st of July, 1852, in the forty-second year of his age.

His child at Christiana, a noble boy of fourteen years, died the same hour; and, to complete the melancholy story, the amiable and good Mrs. Pownall, who, with her benevolent husband, sons, and daughters, had afforded the distressed family every comfort they could desire—this excellent woman died of the same disease, the day Dr. Parrish and his son were buried.

He left a widow with seven children, and to her he bequeathed the care of all his property, with a just and merited confidence in her integrity and wisdom; expressing at the same time, his last wish for his children, that they should be carefully educated in the reverence and love of God.

Few deaths have occurred among the Philadelphia physicians, which so astonished and saddened the hearts of the medical brethren as did that of Dr. P. When age or infirmity has shown for some time that death is approaching, the mind—even the one most tenderly allied—is imperceptibly obtunded by the coming calamity, and meets with some firmness, the last blow: but, Dr. P. was yet in his forty-second year, and was seen but a few days before, full of his usual activity and hope, diffusing health or comfort among his numerous patients. On Sunday night, his wife and children saw him in full animation; the following Saturday, they beheld him a mass of clay, from which the immortal spirit had fled forever; no longer present to assuage their breaking hearts. Such is the uncertainty of human things, and such the mysterious decrees of Heaven: "Man cometh up and is cut down as a flower, he fleeeth as it were a shadow."

He has indeed fled from our sight forever, but his virtuous and useful life, his animating conversation, his vigor in debate, his joyful and happy countenance, his cordial salutation and welcome, none of us can ever forget: these will long remain among our tender recollections; while his active benevolence, and his sympathy with all the afflicted, went before him to the world of spirits, where they must now be his crown of glory that can never fade away. Farewell, then, thou sainted spirit; the prayers and blessings of the poor and the friendless, the widow and the orphan, the prisoner and the stranger, do now consummate your everlasting happiness in Heaven: *they were hungry, and you gave them meat; they were thirsty, and you gave them drink; they were strangers, and you took them in; naked, and you clothed them; sick and in prison, you visited them.*